

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PARIS 22113 01 OF 02 121725Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----109919 121731Z /50

O R 121710Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4697
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 22113

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, LE
SUBJ: NEXT STEPS TO DEFUSE LEBANESE CRISIS: FRENCH
PERPLEXED

REFS: A. STATE 174090. B. STATE 172481.
C. STATE 171142.

1. ON THE BASIS OF REFTELS AND OTHER REPORTING FROM
BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS WE DISCUSSED NEXT STEPS IN
LEBANON AT SOME LENGTH JULY 12 WITH QUAI DEPUTY
DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST SERVANT. SERVANT AGREED
WITH OUR ANALYSIS OF THE DANGERS IN THE CURRENT SIT-
UATION, ON THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE TENUOUS CEASE-
FIRE, AND ON THE NECESSITY OF MOVING BEYOND THE PRESENT
SITUATION TO ENHANCE THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT.
WHILE AGREEING ALSO WITH THE DESIRABILITY OF THE

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REF A PROPOSAL TO ENCOURAGE BALANCED DISARMAMENT OF
THE FACTIONS, SERVANT SAID HE FEARED THE PRACTICAL
OBSTACLES WOULD KEEP IT FROM GETTING OFF THE GROUND.
THE CHRISTIANS WOULD CERTAINLY NOT AGREE TO ANY
REDUCTION IN THEIR ARMAMENT WHILE THE PALESTINIANS
REMAIN ARMED TO THE TEETH. THE PALESTINIANS HAD
REMAINED GENERALLY OUT OF THE CURRENT FIGHTING AND

HE THOUGHT IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE SYRIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO PRESSURE THEM NOW TO GIVE UP THEIR ARMS. MOREOVER, DEPENDING ON HOW EVENTS DEVELOP, THE SYRIANS MAY CALCULATE THAT AT SOME TIME THERE WILL BE A ROLE FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO PLAY IN THEIR SUPPORT.

2. SERVANT SAID THAT WHILE THE GOF AGREED THERE WAS NEED FOR ACTION, IT WAS PERPLEXED AT WHAT SPECIFICALLY MIGHT BE DONE. FOR THE MOMENT THE FRENCH CAN SUGGEST NOTHING MORE THAN URGING MODERATION ON ALL THE PARTIES, WORKING ON SARKIS NOT TO RESIGN AND THEN GETTING SARKIS TO ACT. IT IS LUDICROUS TO SPEAK OF EXTENDING THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE WHEN ITS PRIMARY SYMBOL SITS ISOLATED AND IMMOBILIZED IN BAABDA. SARKIS MUST SOMEHOW BE PERSUADED TO ACT DECISIVELY NOW. EXACTLY WHAT HE DOES MAY BE LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE FACT THAT HE ACTS. FOR A STARTER HE SHOULD BEGIN NEGOTIATING IN A TOUGH MANNER WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS. THE FRENCH HAVE THE IMPRESSION THERE ARE DIVISIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN CAMP WHICH CAN BE EXPLOITED BY SARKIS. IN PARTICULAR THERE SEEMS TO BE A SPLIT BETWEEN PIERRE AND BASHIR GEMAYEL.

3. AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION BEHIND FRENCH THINKING IS THEIR PERCEPTION OF SOLID ARAB SUPPORT FOR THE SYRIAN POSITION. ACCORDING TO THEIR INFORMATION THE
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 22113

EXDIS

LETTER FROM KING KHALID DELIVERED TO HAFEZ AL ASSAD BY FONMIN PRINCE SAUD CONTAINED NO CRITICISM OF THE SYRIAN ACTION IN BEIRUT. WITH SUCH STRONG ARAB SUPPORT FOR SYRIA (IF NOT THE SPECIFIC ACTION IN BEIRUT) THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION. IF THE LEBANESE DEMAND A MEETING THERE WOULD BE NO WAY OF GETTING AROUND IT, BUT THE GOF ESTIMATE IS THAT IT WOULD NOT IMPROVE THE SITUATION.

4. SERVANT SAID THAT THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IS NOT TOO BAD. IF THE GOL DECIDES TO SEND ARMY UNITS TO THE SOUTH (THE CURRENT FIGURE BEING CONSIDERED IS APPARENTLY 600) UNIFIL AND THE LEBANESE FORCES MIGHT IN TIME BE ABLE TO EXTEND THEIR CONTROL ALL THE WAY TO THE BORDER, GRADUALLY EASING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS ASIDE. THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE AREA IS FAVORABLE FOR SUCH A DEVELOPMENT. FOR
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THIS TO COME ABOUT THE ISRAELIS MUST SHOW RESTRAINT IN ARMING THE CHRISTIAN FORCES THERE, AND CLASHES MUST BE AVOIDED BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND THE CHRISTIANS THIS WILL MEAN CONTROLLING THE INFILTRATION OF PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS INTO THE UNIFIL AREA. THIS SHOULD BE WITHIN THE CAPABILITIES OF A COMBINED UNIFIL-LEBANESE FORCE.

5. SERVANT SAID GOF APPRECIATES FLOW OF INFORMATION THROUGH FRENCH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.
HARTMAN

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